

### **Pastor Roy's sermon from April 2, 2017 (Lent 5)**

Our lives are filled with wonders. Think about it. What are the amazing things in your life? What wonders fill you with hope and meaning?

The wonder of birth. Someone where once there was no one. The gift of life. The beauty of life.

The wonder of art. Something created which awaited expression.

The wonder of travel. Seeing new and soul stretching landscape.

The wonder of rain in the summer when all has become parched and dry. The wonder of sunshine after days of clouds. The wonder of warmth after days of cold and chill.

The wonder of friendship alongside solitude. The wonder of looking into the eyes of an animal or at the veins of a leaf and finding familiarity.

The wonder of the senses, smell, sight, hearing, touch, taste. The wonder of food and water.

The wonder of making the connection between creation and God.

The Sun, and the plants which thrive in its light, the ability of plants and animals to live in extreme conditions, light, surrounded by water, or very little water.

The wonder of a garden, of fields growing crops, even a front yard.

The wonder of our bodies. A growing child. Our capacity to heal from illness and injury. They are wonders--all of them.

When we are well, we are alive to wonder. When we are not well, we miss the wonder at work all around us. Instead of wonder, we see trouble. We feel pain and fear. We see limitations and uncertainty. We despair.

That is what happened to Israel. Ezekiel's vision is perfect for a people who have lost hope. His vision is of dry, dead bones, which met a violent death. A people whose survivors were uprooted and sent into exile. A vision of overwhelming grief. Will they survive? Will they ever thrive again?

In Ezekiel's vision, from whence comes the help? Who blows on the dry bones. . .but the Spirit of God. The help does not come from Ezekiel or the people. The help comes from God. The salvation is up to God. Israel is invited to watch this glorious redemption happen. To be aware, but not to make it happen. It *will* happen. But it will *not* be of their doing.

Of course, they will have a role to play. But the energy, the grace, the new life will not come from them. *They* will *not* make it happen. *Their* responsibility is to *watch* it happen, to be grateful, to be filled with joy as they step into the newness, the wonder.

Hundreds of years into Ezekiel's vision, for and of Israel, Jesus weeps with the sisters and friends of Lazarus who died days ago. Jesus joins Ezekiel's chorus of: death swallowed up by life. Jesus proclaims the wonder of life prevailing over death. Wonder overcoming trouble and loss.

Using John's language, wonders are signs of God's glory. They point to God and remind us to trust. Today's Gospel reading is not simply the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The raising part is 8 verses. The rest shows Jesus' care for his *disciples, Lazarus' family, the crowd, and communion with God*. Jesus is sharing his life and inviting those around him to embrace the wonders of God's life.

Our lives are full of wonders. May the wonders of your life reveal God's gracious life surrounding you. That is the goal of Lent. To point us to the life of God which surrounds us, hope and life. Amen.